

1. If we strike without any significant provocations during the period since the last strike, don't we lose a lot of deterrent effect against major provocations? (i.e., attacks on American bases/barracks/facilities, major attacks on ARVN like Binh Dinh). And don't we specifically want to deter these attacks--along with other motives for reprisals?

In fact, if our actions seem (to DRV) unrelated to their current actions at all--e.g., if they are related to minor VC actions "uncontrolled" by DRV, or not related to any current actions at all (except imputed infiltration)--then DRV/VC/Chicom might well feel that they had "nothing to lose" by continuing incidents, even large-scale ones (unless they were prepared to close up shop altogether). To the extent that our raids really bug them, they might even be led to desperate actions--figuring that they wouldn't be increasing the probability of US raids, but might be hastening fruitful negotiations or even tiring the US of the operation, or causing the collapse of the GVN.

At the same time, we don't want them to bring about long periods of no-strikes by reining themselves in temporarily; nor do we want to forego the possibility of gradually expanding operations even if their activity remains at low level.

Recommendation:

1. NVN getting used to attacks
2. Const. crisis — Catholics, sects, Saikhanous (Catholics, Buddhists)
3. VC attacks up, monsoon.

2

Alternatives: 6 divs?
Bomb North
Parade

Quang: morale boost from strikes wearing off
Q + Bui — opposition to social reform.

Elections

Est: SNIE: SAMs, etc, IL-28s

Reaction to our response

- Gains by Comm political action teams.
- Acceptance of NLF as independent, only legit. rep.; open role of PRP;
Claim 80% of territory, 10 million people. Push mission Moscow.
- Siege on Saigon? power; Rte 20, vegetables; rice;
Incidents around Saigon
- Buildup North — several divs? — response as US increases?
- Increased VC — incl ARVN — distraction.
- Possible rise of anti-US feeling (Quang).

Morale improvement: US strikes — NVN — but increased boldness of VC:
+ SVN Shock has worn off.
US troops

AFC dissolved, military in line behind Quang; but...
Civil program bogged

The situation: Recent US efforts have halted rapid deterioration and reduced chance of sudden collapse, but have not yet achieved strong forward movement; the situation is stalemated, with slow deterioration likely to resume. US air strikes in North and South and ground deployments have improved "balance of morale" -- resigning DRV and VC to long struggle with risks of escalation, and convincing SVNese of US commitment -- but, without further escalation, effects may soon wear off. GVN remains preoccupied with internal politics; having won acceptance by military and Buddhists, Quat faces opposition by militant Catholics, and perhaps segments of sects, Southerners and labor. Programs to win political support languish; meanwhile VC continue to strengthen and extend their political control in countryside, by political action and organization backed by terror and steady guerrilla activity. With US air support, ARVN has been taking initiative during period of VC inactivity, but morale of ARVN/GVN will be tested soon if VC, along with PAVN units, risk their yet-unused strengths in major monsoon efforts: e.g., by capture and defense of district/province capital, by proclaiming Liberated Zone in I and II Corps, by major defeats of ARVN in widely-separated attacks that exhaust ARVN reserves, or by spectaculars like major attack on Bien Hoa. Such a test might show serious military weakness of ARVN in some areas, as well as fragility of morale. The DRV lacks interest in negotiation, despite prospects of heavier bombing, believing with good reason that situation still favors VC in mid- and long-term.

Basic question today: Can the GVN improve stalemated situation and achieve forward movement, in political control over countryside and military pressure on VC, (a) without, or (b) with:

- (1) more extreme measures against the DRV,
 - (2) deployment of still larger numbers -- and/or 3-7 divisions -- of US and other combat troops inside SVN, with US takeover of command?
- (a) Without such measures, and without negotiation or sudden collapse under VC military pressure, prospect is for long-drawn stalemate along present lines, with occasional military successes on each side, but with VC -- and perhaps GVN -- strengthening its political control over regions currently held.

(b) 1. Even with pressure of heavier bombing of North, DRV/VC (sustained by Chicomis) are unlikely to show any interest in negotiations until convinced that stalemate is stable, -- which would take time, perhaps six months -- or that trend is against them -- which would take greatly increased efforts, perhaps six US divisions. Nor would bombing by itself produce another lift in morale and effort in the South that was more than temporary.

2. Sizable US and other combat forces -- 3-7 divisions -- plus increases over time in ARVN forces, might significantly attrit VC forces (partly offset by probable increases in infiltrated PAVN units) and extend clear-and-hold operations in currently contested or VC-controlled areas. Accompanied by current or heavier level of bombing the North, this might well interest the DRV and VC (not the Chicomis) in serious negotiations, though on terms that would fall short of current US announced objectives. However, US takeover of command and heavy presence might generate strong anti-US sentiment, reduce ARVN/SVN efforts and put us in crossfire (as in DomRep!) between various contending factions. Moreover, long-run elimination of VC infrastructure and creation of effective GVN control would depend critically on actual implementation of measures improving local administration, strengthening police, and creating popular support for GVN.

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- 1) more extreme measures against the DRV, (and/or 3-
- 2) deployment of still larger numbers--~~2-3~~ 3-7 divisions--of US and other combat troops inside SVN, with US takeover of command?

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(or

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Accompanied by current or heavier level of bombing the North,

IF judged that negotiations were compatible with continued pressures--we wouldn't have to ask or demand much in the way of "signal."

But if negotiations were likely to lead to strong pressures (e.g., within gov) for ending strikes and tempering US actions in SVN--we should announce stiff conditions. That is likely, for formal negotiations (not for informal, secret talks).

Any talk of negotiations--as opposed to posture, "We're sure that NVN isn't ready to talk seriously yet--may detract from the main desired effect from strikes: evidence of strong US commitment, staying power (to SVN and to VC). This could be avoided by announcing very stiff conditions for negotiations--while reaping advantage in third countries of appearing to have a well-defined policy. In fact, this might enhance effect of program: (by making it harder to stop it, short of compliance):

(Answer to Friedman: Is it bad for them to have to ask themselves, "What is it they want us to do?" ~~MM~~ If we put on stiff conditions, what is benefit--won't they be as likely as before to react desperately? If we don't, bad effect.

((Issue: Might we tell/hint to SU, or CC, or DRV, what the real objective of our policy is--to make it look likely that it will continue, while reassuring them as to intent to bring down Hanoi?))

Weigh cost of continuing comm.

of the 2.3 tons required per day from external sources, portions could enter S. Vietnam in ~~the~~ a variety of ways:

- ① By land routes from N. VN thru Laos.
- ② " " " " " " " " + Camb.
- ③ " sea " " " "
 - Ocean-going vessels to Delta area, then lightered to shore.
 - Ocean-going vessels to Cambodian ports - in the guise of legitimate cargo. Then smuggled across S. VN frontier by truck, or in sampans.
 - Ocean-going vessels, making land-fall directly on coast of S. VN. at zones under control of VC. (As in Cap Varella Feb 65 incident,

- *links*

It is probable that all of the above are utilized by the Communists. To the extent that all routes except ① above are used, Route ① usage would be reduced.